

# Domestic Violence

Effective July 1, 1993, law enforcement agencies in Tennessee were required to report domestic violence cases investigated on or after January 1, 1994. TCA 36-3-619 contains provisions for law enforcement officers to follow when responding to a domestic violence call. Subsection (f) requires that an officer's supervisor forward domestic violence data to the administrative director of the courts (AOC) on a monthly basis. Log sheets were developed by AOC staff with input from law enforcement officials and distributed to law enforcement agencies in December of 1993.

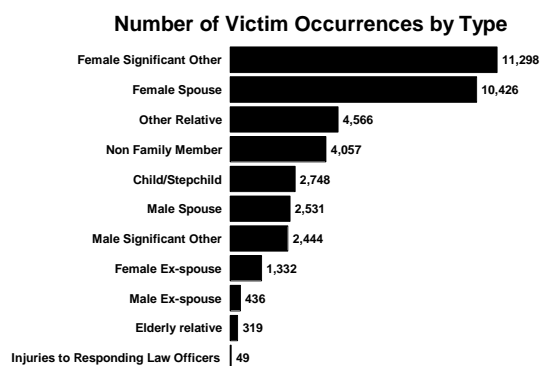
Although there has been a slight increase in the number of law enforcement agencies across the state that are reporting, failure to comply has been a major problem. For the fiscal year 1996-97, only 52 percent of all law enforcement agencies required to report (sheriff and police departments) submitted information. In addition, victim information is not available for some jurisdictions (Annual Report of the Tennessee Judiciary 1996-97).

The increase in statewide reporting is primarily attributed to the implementation of a new reporting system called the Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS) that addresses crime incidents and all elements associated with the specific crime. Incident-based reporting systems are also being implemented in other states as the preferred method for capturing domestic violence data.

## What Works

- Community shelters that offer refuge from the violence to support the family in transition, working in collaboration with other community resources for referral and support services.
- Development of programs that build supports for the child with a competent adult. The most important protective resource to enable a child to cope with exposure to violence is a strong relationship with a competent adult.
- Schools and community centers that provide opportunities for children to benefit from the support of peers, which has been shown to be instrumental in reducing anxiety among children exposed to violence.
- Community supports to help children and families feel less isolated and overwhelmed, and more able to cope with the chronic violence in their lives.

## Domestic Violence in Tennessee



Source: Annual Report of the Tennessee Judiciary, FY 1996-1997

Nationally researchers estimate that 3.3 to 10 million children per year are exposed to domestic violence. The wide range of estimates is due to the nature of current data collection forms and the failure of the forms to indicate the sex and relationship of the victims to the perpetrators. The lack of accurate data creates issues for policy makers related to the formulation of public policy about domestic violence and victim services. It is difficult to make accurate service-need projections on both the state and local level if there is no reliable data as a basis for projection.